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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION ON AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO CUBA

Letter dated 31 March 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to address you on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Member States to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Emergency assistance to Cuba".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum concerning the request is annexed to the present letter.

(Signed) E. Besley MAYCOCK
Permanent Representative of Barbados
Chairman of the Latin American
and Caribbean Group

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

From the night of Friday, 12 March, onwards, the western and central provinces of Cuba were affected by an atmospheric phenomenon, identified as a cold front associated with a low pressure system, that produced winds of up to 200 kilometres per hour and waves of up to 25 feet. Eight of the 14 Cuban provinces were seriously affected on account of the high winds and violent sea-water flooding in the coastal areas, which caused loss of life and injuries, as well as a large number of displaced persons and grave damages not only to homes but also to industrial and service installations and to both staple and export crops.

Preliminary estimates of losses are over $1 billion; 5 deaths were reported, 95 people were injured and 147,680 persons were directly affected. Hundreds of thousands of persons suffered heavy losses, with tens of thousands in temporary shelters. A total of 1,484 homes were totally destroyed and 36,401 partially destroyed; 3,248 production and service installations were either destroyed or suffered widespread damage, including hospitals, schools, industries, communication lines and roads, drinking water, sanitation and food storage installations and port facilities.

Staple crops, such as bananas, other fruits and vegetables and potatoes, as well as export crops of tobacco, citrus fruits and coffee, were seriously damaged. A total of 2,810 agricultural installations were affected, and tens of thousands of head of cattle were lost. The sugar harvest, at its peak at the time of the storm, also suffered directly, while a number of finished products from the sugar industry were lost.

Industries such as those for steel production, refrigeration and industrial machinery were paralysed; a number of hotels for tourism suffered serious damage; and transport units, fishing vessels and facilities in the Port of Havana, including high-powered cranes and storage facilities, were either partially or totally destroyed.

Intense sea-water flooding also caused the loss of full stocks of antibiotics and vaccines, blood banks and laboratory facilities, among others, in hospitals in the affected areas.

Although national efforts have been fully deployed to counter the effects of the storm, with immediate emphasis on the alleviation of human suffering, and although some international aid has been received in the country, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States considers it necessary that the United Nations, through the inclusion of the corresponding item in the agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the adoption of a resolution and the granting of direct aid, encourages the provision of massive international assistance to Cuba on account of the severity of the losses and of the widespread damage to the Cuban economy caused by this atmospheric phenomenon.